

MENTAL HEALTH

Crisis Management

Not every health emergency is physical. Here's how you can help a young person experiencing a mental health crisis.

Jan Fisher, director of public affairs for Westchester Jewish Community Services (WJCS), gives us the lowdown on Youth Mental Health First Aid, a White Plains-based certification course that trains adults to help young people in crisis.

Q: What is Youth Mental Health First Aid?

A: "Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA), the CPR for mental health, is an evidence-based certification course that equips adults with information and tools to help young people, ages 12 to 18, who are experiencing a mental health challenge or crisis. It's an interactive eight-hour course, which is usually completed in two four-hour sessions."

**Q: What are some of the topics covered in the course?**

A: "The course introduces common mental health challenges for youth, including anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and suicide; reviews typical adolescent development; and builds participants' understanding of the impact and prevalence of mental health problems."

Q: How did the training course come about?

A: "In 2014, WJCS introduced YMHFA training to Westchester in partnership with the Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health. Since then, WJCS and other community organizations have certified more than 1,600 youth-mental-health first-aiders."

Q: Who can take the course?

A: "It is intended for non-mental-health professionals and other adults who work with and care for youth, such as parents, caregivers, teachers, coaches, peers, and neighbors. However, mental health professionals have reported that they, too, find the course very useful."

Courses are held regularly at various county locations. For more info, visit www.wjcs.com. — PM